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Roads crave for black top coating

Vehicle ferry jetty lies rotting at Long Island



TABASSUM NISHA ALI

PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/Well buying a car is easy, if you have money in your pockets. But wait for a minute, have you ever thought that driving a car needs motorable roads and without black top roads your car will just be a show piece. But sadly, for the 1400 odd people living in Long Island, past promises of constructing black-top roads in this region have remained unfulfilled for various reasons,

including bizarre ones like the headquarter region of Long Island being too small in size for black top roads. Located some 82 km from Port Blair, Long Island has a geographical area of about 20 sq kms with a paltry local population, and is of little significance to the planners sitting in the headquarters here. The about 1400 odd population living in this Island consists of local residents who live here for generations, some local fishermen, some who came to this Island few years back in

search of livelihood and settled here and those government employees who are posted here for providing services to the local population. The headquarters region of Long Island has some 4 sq km of cemented footpath circling the headquarter area. Earlier, few two wheelers could be seen plying in the footpath, but now pickup trucks, omni vans, autos and two wheelers are also visible on the footpath. For the local population, the dream of a proper road has been passed on from generation to

concealed the hardships faced by people living here.

The most fascinating aspect is that without having blacktop motorable roads, Long Island has a vehicle ferry jetty constructed with the aim to help commuters carry their vehicles. With no four wheelers or few and far in between, the vehicle ferry jetty remained unused for the past many years. Villagers say the vehicle ferry jetty is constructed with the purpose to evacuate people during emergencies. Now residents argue that

After decades of settlement, Long Island still lacks motorable black top roads. Sadly, for the 1400 odd people living in this region, past promises of constructing black top roads have remained unfulfilled as authorities have turned a blind eye to the issue. For many, the beauty of Long Island has concealed the hardships faced by people living here

generation—with authorities turning a blind eye to this issue. The area has regular boat services from Yeratta to Long Island on a daily basis. Boat service is the only mode of transportation for the people of this Island. According to reports, the first ferry boat departs Long Island at 7.00 am. It reaches Yeretta, Rangat at 8.00 am and after de-boarding the passengers, it reached Long Island at 10.00 am. In the afternoon, the ferry leaves Long Island at 2.00 pm and after de-boarding passengers at Yeratta jetty, Rangat the ferry reaches Long Island at 4.00 pm. Speaking to EOI, a local resident who is also a public representative said after many decades of settlement, this Island still lacks black top roads as movement of people and vehicles are forced to navigate on the cemented footpath. The authorities have been ignoring the demands for blacktop roads for the past many years. But from a tourist point of view, the beauty of Long Island has

when there is a vehicle ferry jetty already in good condition, why not black top roads be constructed so that people can use their vehicles for travel. Another theory floating among the locals here is that blacktop road is not a big issue now. Long Island is among the four islands identified by NITI Aayog for holistic development. As per NITI Aayog, a slew of infrastructure and tourism development projects will be taken up here by NITI Aayog. Lalaji Bay, an untapped beach of this island, has been identified for development of luxury hotels with related facilities. Once the work starts on ground, it is but natural that more infrastructure facilities like black top road network, boat services, power supply and water facilities will be improved extensively. Development of Lalaji Bay beach will create more infrastructure facilities and open job avenues for the locals, including a boost to the rural economy.



Lal Pahar residents seek health sub-centre relocation

EOI CORRESPONDENT

PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/While the health department is keen on closing down the neglected health sub-centre located near Veer Savarkar Park, Chouldhari, residents of Lal Pahar wanted the health sub-centre to be relocated to their area. After the start of a Primary Health Centre at Chouldhari, the sub-centre lost its significance and gradually became irrelevant for both the health department and the people of Chouldhari. The health sub-centre is in a state of neglect now. The ex-Pradhan, Chouldhari, Mr. Mohan Halder has also taken up the issue of relocation of the sub-centre to Lal Pahar with the top brass of the health department.

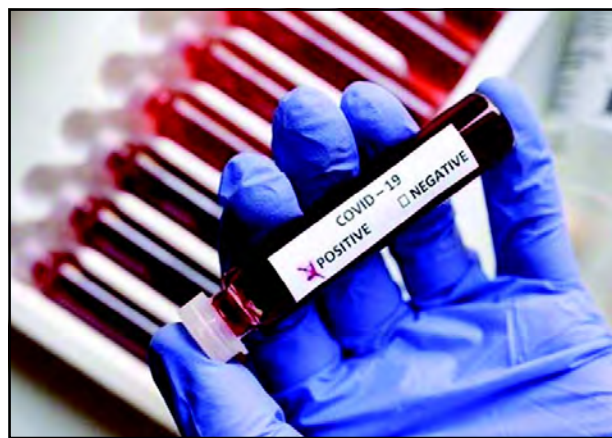
During his recent Chouldhari visit, the Chief Secretary also directed authorities to close down the sub-centre as the health requirements of the residents of this area are well taken care of in PHC, Chouldhari. Lal Pahar village has over 200 houses with a total population of 800 people and for the past many years, the villagers here have been demanding for relocation of the health sub centre to their area. Pregnant women from Lal Pahar and adjoining areas had to travel nearly 3 kms to this health sub-centre for vaccination and routine check ups. Villagers living in this region for long have been demanding the shifting of this sub-centre from this isolated location to Lalpahar junction having a reasonably good population, said villagers.

"The ex-Pradhan, Mr. Mohan Halder after discussing the issue in a Gram Sabha meeting had submitted a letter to the Director of Health Services, urging him to relocate the health sub-centre from the seashore point to Lal Pahar junction. Vacant govt land is already available for a new sub-centre building at Lal Pahar. In the meantime, the vacant rooms in the Panchayat building can be used as temporary sub-centre till the new building is constructed", said a villager.

AE, APWD terminated

PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/ A Assistant Engineer of APWD, was terminated on Saturday, allegedly on corruption charges. He was posted in the CD-II, Prothrapur, APWD. For a long time, he was in the radar of the Anti-Corruption unit of the administration. (More details are awaited.)

Covid update: 49 test +ve on Monday, active 449



PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/49 new positive Covid cases were reported on Monday. The active case tally has reached 449 in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Out of 49, 32 positive cases are airport arrivals while 17 are Contacts. The confirmed cases in the 3rd wave have touched 967 while 518 have been cured.



MP for operation of ship for C/Bay for stranded students

PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/The Member of Parliament, Mr. Kuldeep Rai Sharma has requested the Chief Secretary to issue directions to the concerned departments to schedule a ship for Nicobar District, especially Campbell Bay so that the stranded students can reach their home safely. In a letter to the Chief Secretary, Mr. Sharma mentioned that following closure of various colleges due to surge in COVID-19 cases in the Islands, a large number of students from various Islands, especially Campbell Bay are

stranded at Port Blair and are facing hardship in boarding and lodging. Many students have exhausted all money they had and are unable to buy various commodities they require for daily use. He mentioned that it is practically impossible for many students to pay for private accommodation and daily food. Mr. Sharma added that parents of these students from different Islands are equally concerned about the safety of their children and want their children to return back, fearing infection.

Wage funds lay forgotten, though released ANIIMS health workers dream of unpaid salaries



EOI BUREAU

PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/ Despite working overtime during the Covid-19 pandemic, over 135 health workers, including junior resident doctors of Andaman Nicobar Islands Institute of Medical Sciences (ANIIMS), engaged on contract basis, have not been paid their two months' salary. This is causing them severe hardships, as they are unable to support themselves and their families.

ANIIMS has recently extended the contract period of these health workers for a period of three months, starting from 1st January to 31 March

The salary of November and December 2021, of health workers of ANIIMS have not been paid to them despite release of adequate funds. This is causing them severe hardships, as they are unable to support themselves and their families.

2022. However their salaries for the month of November and December 2021, have not been paid to them despite release of adequate funds to ANIIMS, according to sources. The delay in payment of salaries to these contract health workers and doctors are owing to the fact that the new Director, ANIIMS has not taken over his assignment. Since the

establishment of ANIIMS, several contractual staff, including doctors were hired by ANIIMS whose contracts are renewed every year. This year, also after some hiccups, their contract was not renewed for three months, even though the staffs have been discharging their duties. But their salaries for the month of November and

December 2021 have not been given which has put many of them in a difficult situation, as the income from this job is the only source for them to earn two square meals for their families.

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Delhi govt's Covid helpline number receives 12,471 calls from Jan 10-16

NEW DELHI, JAN 17 /--/ The Delhi government received as many as 12,471 calls on its Covid helpline number 1031 over the last one week, even as the number of calls saw a slight decline from January 13 to January 16. Data provided by the city health department also showed that between January 10 and January 16, as many as 9,899 calls were received for ambulances. Meanwhile, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Monday said the number of fresh COVID-19 cases has been reducing in the city for the last few days. According to the health department's data, between January 10 (Monday) and January 16 (Sunday), a total of 12,471 calls were received on the government's Covid helpline number and 9,899 calls for ambulances were received separately.

On January 10, the city government received 1,438 calls on the number, which rose to 1,762 a day after and then further to 2,062 on January 13 (Thursday). The number of calls on the helpline started declining from Thursday. On Friday, 1,996 calls were received, 1,811 calls were received on Saturday and 1,585 on Sunday.

Similarly, the number of calls for ambulances increased from 1,095 to 1,703 between January 10 and January 11, but started reducing thereafter. On January 12, 1,522 calls were received for ambulances, which further went down to 1,408 on January 13, the data showed. It rose to 1,420 calls on January 14 and then declined to 1,390 on January 15. It further rose to 1,391 on January 16 (Sunday). Health department officials said most of the calls received on the helpline number were regarding queries about hospital beds, vaccination, Covid testing, symptoms of the virus and issues being faced by people at the government hospitals. Covid patients also called on the number to get telephonic consultation with doctors, they added.

Earlier in the day, Jain said the number of fresh Covid cases has been reducing in Delhi and Monday will be the fourth straight day when the number will be lesser than that of the previous day. He said the city is likely to witness 4,000-5,000 cases less than the number reported on Sunday. The national capital recorded 18,286 COVID-19 cases on Sunday with a positivity rate of 27.8 per cent. A total of 28 deaths due to the viral disease were also reported in Sunday's health bulletin. (PTI)

UP's regional political outfit extends support to Congress

LUCKNOW, JAN 17 /--/ Ittehad-e-Millat Council, a regional political party of Uttar Pradesh seen as having considerable influence over Muslims of the Bareilly sect, on Monday extended its support to the Congress in all the five poll-bound states. The support was extended by the outfit chief Tauqir Ahmed Raza Khan on Monday following which UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu thanked him. Khan, a religious leader of the Bareilly sect of Sunni Muslims had founded his political party Ittehad-e-Millat Council n 2001. In the 2012 elections, Khan's party had made Shazil Islam Ansari, a former Bahujan Samaj Party minister, its candidate from Bhojipura constituency in Bareilly. Though he had won the polls, he joined the Samajwadi Party later.

Speaking at a press conference at the UPCC headquarters here, Khan said restoring peace and harmony in these five states as well as the country, protecting the Constitution, backwards, downtrodden, oppressed and minorities, youths and farmers is possible only under the Congress and its leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi. "I discussed the problems of Muslim society with leaders of all political parties and asked them to reflect on these problems in their manifesto and in the party meetings but apart from the Congress, no political party thought it appropriate to talk openly on these issues," he said. He added that he also met Priyanka Gandhi and realised that the future of the country and the state, communal harmony and the Constitution can be safe only in the hands of those whose families have sacrificed their lives for the unity and integrity of the country.

Criticising Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, Khan accused him of arrogance and alleged that his dreams of raising party flag by ignoring the Muslim leadership will never come true. The Muslims felt cheated in earlier governments led by the Samajwadi Party. They formed governments in the past on the basis of four strength. (PTI)

Samajwadi Party gave tickets to criminals after taking money from them: UP CM

GHAZIABAD 17 JAN /--/ The BJP's Uttar Pradesh government has ensured a fear-free environment for the people by reining in criminals in the state, chief minister Yogi Adityanath said here on Monday.

The Samajwadi Party, which has been protecting criminals, on the contrary, has now given tickets to anti-social elements and history sheeters for several assembly seats, including Kairana, Muzaffarnagar, Siyana, Bulandshahar and Loni in western Uttar Pradesh, the CM said. By giving tickets to criminals, the SP has exposed its nexus with the anti-social element as the people fielded by the party in the area have been behind the exodus of people and communal riots, he



Yogi Adityanath

added. The CM apparently referred to the alleged large-scale of people from the Kairana area after the 2013 communal riots in

Muzaffarnagar. The UP chief minister made the remarks while addressing reporters at Santosh Hospital Ghaziabad where he also inspected the arrangements for the treatment of COVID 19 patients. The state government has evicted landgrabbers from the land of Dalits and vulnerable people, he said, adding the traders and businessmen in the state have been feeling safe for the first time under his government. The BJP will get an absolute majority and form the government in UP yet again and habitual offenders criminals would continue to be jailed, he asserted. The Samajwadi Party has declared the list of its candidates ignoring their criminal antecedents and taking money from them, he said. (PTI)

MSP for every crop, free irrigation, cane arrear in 15 days: Akhilesh's promises to farmers



National President of Samajwadi Party Akhilesh Yadav with farmer leader Tejinder Virk taking pledge on 'Anna Sankalp' to defeat the BJP at a press conference at Party office, in Lucknow

LUCKNOW, JAN 17 /--/ Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav Monday made several promises to the farmers of Uttar Pradesh including MSP for every crop, free irrigation facilities, payment of arrears to cane-growers in 15 days, interest-free loans, and insurance and pension.

Yadav also said that cases lodged against farmers during their agitation against the now-repealed farm laws would be withdrawn, and the families of farmers who died during the protest would be given Rs 25 lakh each. Speaking to the media here, the SP supremo said all these promises would be part of the party's election manifesto for the assembly elections in the state. He said a special 'Farmers Revolving Fund' would be created, if needed, to ensure the payment of arrears to sugarcane farmers in 15 days.

Before announcing the blueprint, the SP chief took an "Anna Sankalp" (food

commitment) to express his firm resolve for the welfare of the farmers in the state. He said the party has already vowed to provide 300 units of electricity to everybody. The Samajwadi Party, which has entered into an alliance with the Rashtriya Lok Dal, is trying to cash in on the recent farmers' agitation.

The western Uttar Pradesh, from where many farmers had participated in the stir against the agri-marketing laws on Delhi borders, is scheduled to vote in the first phase of voting on February 10. Rakesh Tikait, one of the more prominent faces of the year-long agitation, hails from this region. While explaining in detail his party's plan for the farmers, the SP chief did not miss an opportunity to attack the BJP, accusing it of neglecting farmers during its rule. "The BJP in its 2017 polls manifesto had promised to double the income of the farmers. Has it been

achieved?" he asked. Referring to the Lakhimpur Kheri violence in which four farmers were knocked down by a four-wheeler in October last year, the former chief minister said the incident was even worse than the infamous Jallianwala Bagh case during British rule. "In the Jallianwala Bagh case innocent people were killed by the Britishers by shooting them I their chest, but in the Lakhimpur Kheri incident innocent farmers returning home were crushed under the wheels of the vehicle," he said.

The SP chief also took a swipe at the BJP for "not initiating any action" against Union minister of state for home Ajay Mishra Teni whose son Ashish has been described by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) as the main accused of the October 3 killings. Ashish is lodged in a jail in the case that raised concern across the country. Reacting to Yadav's promises, Uttar Pradesh BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh tweeted in Hindi, "Those who used to roam around with a gun in their hand, are pretending to be the well-wishers of farmers. During their regime, our farmers used to fear going to their farms during the night." While Minimum Support Price (MSP) is at present provided on some selected crops, the SP chief promised to cover all the crops under the safety net. The SP supremo was accompanied by Tejinder Singh Virk, who had led the farmers' protest in Lakhimpur Kheri against the visit of deputy chief minister Keshabh Prasad Maurya to Ajay Mishra's native place. Virk had alleged that the vehicles that ran over the protesters that day also targeted him. (PTI)

Largest flypast with 75 aircraft on Republic Day this year

NEW DELHI, JAN 17 /--/ The Republic Day parade at the Rajpath this year will see the "grandest and largest" flypast ever with the participation of 75 aircraft to mark the Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav celebrations, an IAF official said on Monday.

The flypast will conclude with seven jaguar fighter aircraft flying in the 'Amrit' formation to commemorate the 75 years of Independence. "The flypast this year will be the grandest and largest with 75 aircraft from IAF, Army and Navy flying during the Republic Day parade. This is in line with the Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav celebrations," IAF PRO Wing Commander Indranil Nandi said at a press briefing. "The flypast will include Tangail formation which will have one Dakota and two Dornier flying in Vic formation. This is a tribute to the Tangail airport operations of the 1971 War. There will also be Meghna formation of 1 Chinook and four Mi-17s," he said.

The flypast will begin with the 'Dhwaj' formation with four Mi-17 aircraft, followed by 'Rudra' and 'Rahat' formations with four and five Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH), respectively. Among the other aircraft that will display their might at the parade are Rafale, Indian Navy's MiG29K, P-8I surveillance aircraft and Jaguar fighter jets. The Indian Air force also unveiled its tableau for the Republic Day celebrations, with assets like Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) armed with AT Dhruvastra missile, Ashlesha Mk1 radar, Gnat, Rafale, MIG 21 on display. (PTI)

SC asks DMs to involve SJPUs, DLSA, voluntary organisations to identify, rehabilitate children

NEW DELHI, JAN 17 /--/ The Supreme Court Monday directed all the District Magistrates to involve Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU), District Legal Service Authority (DLSA), and voluntary organisations in the identification and rehabilitation of children in street situations, adversely hit by COVID-19 pandemic, without any further delay.

A bench comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao and B V Nagarathna said the problem for these children in street situations would be in an aggravated form in winters and immediate steps should be taken by the states and Union Territories to shift them to shelter homes. "As the implementation of directions issued by this court on earlier occasions relating to identification and rehabilitation does not brook further delay, we direct all DMs to involve DLSA and voluntary organisations in the identification of children on streets without any further delay. The DMs are also directed to upload the information at all stages on the web portal of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (Baal Swaraj)," the bench said.

The top court, hearing a suo motu case about the children who are adversely affected by the pandemic by losing either one or both the parents, also directed the states with the guidance of NCPCR to formulate a policy for rehabilitation after they



have been identified and asked them to file a status report within three weeks. It also directed the states and UTs to instruct concerned authorities not to delay the identification and rehabilitation of children. At the outset, Additional Solicitor General K M Nataraj, appearing for NCPCR, submitted that many states have not uploaded the details of children in street situations on the Bal Swaraj Portal. Concerning Delhi, the apex court noted that while earlier 70,000

children were identified, the AAP government has now said that it has identified only 428 children. "This is not a normal case. The problem would be in an aggravated form for these children in street situations. There are children who don't have anybody to take care of them. The condition of children would become worse in northern parts of the country. "Just imagine how they are surviving on the streets. You have to immediately shift them to 'rain basera', shelter homes.

This is your duty. We need not tell you to keep doing this and that. Act immediately. This one month is very difficult. Let them be removed to a shelter home immediately," the bench said.

The apex court also expressed displeasure over the submission of states that the slow pace in identification of children in street situations is due to Covid. "We are not running away from reality and we know that the country is in the third

surge of Covid and members of the executive might be busy in trying to control the situation but children also cannot be ignored. Covid cannot be an excuse in this case," the bench said.

Additional Advocate General (AAG) for Uttar Pradesh Garima Prashad informed the top court that about 30,282 children were identified in the state in five districts by NGOs. She contended that the state government is attempting to reach out to those children and several teams have been sent out to look for such children. The amicus curiae submitted that there is no information provided by states and UTs regarding steps taken for rehabilitation of children who have not been identified and asserted that it is imminent that states decide this. The matter will now be heard after four weeks. The apex court had earlier said the process of identifying children in street situations, adversely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, is at a very slow pace and directed the states and union territories (UTs) to take immediate steps to identify such children and rehabilitate them without waiting for its directions.

Earlier, the bench had directed all the District Magistrates states and UTs to take steps for the care and protection of children in street situations prepared by the NCPCR in 2020. It was also brought to the court's notice that there are about 70,000 children in the streets of Delhi alone. (PTI)

Political parties welcome EC's decision to postpone Punjab polls

CHANDIGARH, JAN 17 /--/ Political parties in Punjab on Monday welcomed the Election Commission's decision to postpone the state Assembly polls to February 20 in view of Guru Ravidas Jayanti, saying it will enable his followers to visit UP's Varanasi for festivities. Earlier, Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi and political parties in the state had urged the poll panel to postpone the date of voting as lakhs of followers of Guru Ravidas travel to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh to celebrate his birth anniversary on February 16. Channi had said as members of the Scheduled Castes community are likely to visit Varanasi from February 10 to 16, they won't be able to vote in the elections. Accepting the demand, the Election Commission decided on Monday to hold the polls in Punjab on February 20 instead of February 14. The Punjab CM said he welcomes decision as it will enable a large number of followers from the state, especially it's Doaba region, to travel to Varanasi to celebrate the Guru's birth anniversary. SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal said, "We had urged the Election Commission to postpone the date and we welcome the EC decision. Badal's party is contesting next month's polls in alliance with the BSP.

Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu also welcomed the decision. Union minister and BJP leader Som Prakash said they had also urged the poll panel to postpone the elections and the party welcomes the decision. Aam Aadmi Party's senior leader Harpal Singh Cheema, who is Leader of the Opposition in Punjab, said, "AAP had demanded that election date should be postponed and we are happy that the EC has taken this decision."

On January 13, chief minister Channi had urged the Election Commission to postpone the polling date by six days "for enabling around 20 lakh SC devotees to utilise their right to vote for the state Legislative Assembly." "A large number of SC devotees from the state are likely to visit Benares in Uttar Pradesh from February 10 to 16. In such a situation, many people from this community would not be able to cast their votes for the state Assembly," said Channi who belongs to the community.

Bahujan Samaj Party's Punjab chief Jasvir Singh Garhi was the first to demand postponement of the polling. He requested the Election Commission to hold the polls on February 20, instead of February 14. (PTI)

Zomato delivery boy shot dead in Rewari

REWARI, JAN 17 /--/ A delivery boy of online food delivery platform Zomato was shot dead in Rewari when he went to serve an order in Ansal township in Sector 19. His mobile and wallet were also found missing and the police suspected that he was shot with intent to rob. An FIR has been registered at the Model Town police station. The police identified the deceased as Mahendra Singh (30), a resident of Hudithal village of district Palwal and he was currently living in Durga Colony, Rewari and used to work as a delivery boy in Zomato. On Sunday night, he went to Ansal township with a food order. It was just at the gate of the township when someone shot him and he got injured. A passerby saw Mahendra lying in an injured condition and he informed the police. Police reached the spot and rushed the injured to the hospital. He was shot in the stomach and his purse and mobile were also found missing from the spot. (PTI)

Vishal for operation of Inter-Island boat services

PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/Mr. Vishal Jolly, National Executive Member BJP, Former State President, BJP-ANI & Home Ministry Advisory Committee has demanded boat



service for stranded students and inter Island public at Port Blair. In his letter, he said that with the recent surge in Covid cases all the schools/colleges and other educational institutions have been closed as a precautionary measure to contain the spreading of COVID cases. As a result, a number of students hailing from Little Andaman and other southern groups of Islands who are pursuing their studies are stranded in Port Blair and they

TSG Bhasker flags concern of stranded students

are unable to go back to their residence, thus they are facing untold troubles and pain to reach their home in this pandemic situation. Accordingly, Mr. Jolly requested to direct the concerned authority to make necessary arrangement and chalk out a suitable shipping schedule, especially transportation of stranded students and general public who stuck here since long to Little Andaman and other southern group of Islands such as Nicobar, Kamorta, Katchal, and Campbell Bay on priority basis.

PBMC invites application under Affordable Housing

PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/The Port Blair Municipal Council has invited applications from residents of Port Blair city for availing benefit under Affordable Housing in partnership component of PMAY(U) during the year 2017 and a total of 555 beneficiaries were identified against the scheme. In order to implement the AHP component of PAY(U), the Port Blair Municipal Council is now involved in validating the final list of beneficiaries amongst the identified 555, who are willing to take benefit of AHP of PMAY(U) and ready to accept all the terms and conditions, including paying of beneficiary's share.

In view of this, all the identified beneficiaries of PMAY(U) have been asked to contact the PMAY(U) facilitation Centre functioning at the premises of PBMC Main Office during any working hours upto 31-01-2022 and confirm the willingness to take benefit of the scheme.

This appeal may be treated as final notice to all 555 identified AHP beneficiaries of PMAY (U) and no further individual information will be communicated to them. Further, any claims in future courses will not be entertained in any respect after 31st January 2022.

Students protest demanding special boat services



PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/Hundreds of students hailing from different places in the islands, under the banner of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) on Monday stage protest in front of the District Administration demanding operation of special boat services for the

return of scores of students stranded at Port Blair. The stranded students are not able to return to their homes due to restricted boat services in the inter-island sector. Students hailing from Swaraj Dweep, Shaheed Dweep, Nancowry, Hut bay, Campbell Bay were present in the protest.

IGNOU launches Master of Arts (Corporate Social Responsibility)

PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/The School of Extension & Development Studies of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has launched a new programme - Master of Arts (Corporate Social Responsibility) (MACSR) programme commencing from January 2022 session. The MACSR is meant for CSR professionals across India and for graduates / post-graduates interested in pursuing a career as a CSR Professional.

The MACSR programme has been designed in such a way to enhance the holistic understanding of CSR by covering various aspects like CSR fundamentals, CSR process and its linkages with development, implementation and handling of projects and programmes, and corporate ethics, governance and conflict resolution.

The main objective of the programme is; to impart knowledge and understanding about CSR through Open and Distance Learning; to expand the capacity of learners on various theoretical and practical aspects of CSR and development work; to develop professional knowledge in formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of CSR projects and programmes, and to equip the learners with the needed skills in corporate ethics, governance and conflict resolution.

The Employees of companies undertaking CSR; Professionals working in

development sector and NGOs; implementing CSR activities, development functionaries, social workers and civil servants, Faculty, researchers and students in universities, research organizations and colleges; Graduates wanting to pursue a career in CSR can take admission in MACSR programme. Exit option is available for the candidates who complete the first year of MACSR to get a PG Diploma in Corporation Social Responsibility (PGDCSR) if they discontinue the MA Programme.

The two years Master of Arts (Corporate Social Responsibility) is offered in English Medium, Total Fees Rs.14,400/- (each year -Rs.7200/-) consist of 72 credits with 18 theory courses and one project. Any Bachelor's degree of minimum three year duration from a recognized University is eligible for the MACSR programme. Online Admissions for the January 2022 session are open. Interested students may directly click the Admissions Link: <https://ignouadmission.samarth.edu.in/> or contact Dr. Nisha Varghese; nishavarghese@ignou.ac.in; Ph: 8826459659; 011-29571668 and Prof. P.V.K.Sasidhar; pvksasidhar@ignou.ac.in; Ph: 9910050413; 011-29571665. Two Study Centres located in Port Blair-0201 and Mayabunder-0208 are activated to offer this programme under Port Blair Regional Centre of IGNOU.

Computer literacy for Skilled supporting Staff of ICAR-CIARI gets underway

PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/The Social Science Section and Agricultural Knowledge Management Unit (AKMU) of ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute is jointly organising a training programme from 17th -21st January 2022, at AKMU on "Computer Literacy for Skilled Supporting Staff" of the institute under HRD. The training program was inaugurated on 17th January 2022 by Dr. Eaknath B Chakurkar, Director, ICAR-CIARI. Speaking on the occasion the Chief Guest stressed upon the history and evolution of office technology from the typewriter to computer and contribution of digital technology in increasing the work productivity to nearly manifolds than it was in 1970. Besides, it saves a lot of time for quality work. He advised all the participants to remove the anxiety and fear about learning to use computers. He also asked the participants not to hesitate to ask any questions arising in their mind during the Hands-on training imparted by the experts. In his concluding remarks he appreciated the efforts taken by the team in conducting a very useful skilled development program which will pave the

way in streamlining the activities by the staff in this digital arena. Dr. T.P. Swarnam, Principal Scientist & Nodal Officer, Human Resource Development gave the genesis of the training program and expectation from the ICAR. Dr. S K Zamir Ahmed, Principal Scientist and Course Director spoke about the outcome and benefit of the computer literacy training programme for skilled supporting staff.

At the outset, Shri. D. Karunakaran, Scientist and Course Coordinator welcomed the dignitaries and briefed about the objective and overall topic of the training programme such as Basic computer fundamentals, Microsoft Word, Excel, e-office, ERP, Market exposure, data collection techniques, compilation and post-evaluation. Dr. R. Jaya Kumaravaradan, Scientist and Course Coordinator conducted pre-evaluation and proposed the vote of thanks. The entire inaugural function was coordinated by Mrs. Asma Bibi, Technical Assistant, AKMU, ICAR-CIARI, Port Blair.

A total of 22 Skilled Supporting Staff are participating in two batches following all the protocols of Covid-19.

Students stage protest for non-sailing of boats



PORT BLAIR, JAN 17/--/Protesting against the A&N Administrations failure to make transportation arrangements for inter-islander students, hundreds of students from different colleges took to the streets on Monday morning and protested in the IP&T Parking area. They demanded the District Administration to ensure regular and timely boat service for transporting all inter-islander students.

The protest was led by NSUI State President Mr. M.A Sajid, NSUI District Vice-President, Mr. Ayush Singh and NSUI State

General Secretary Mr. R. Mukesh. Later, a delegation of NSUI along with the protestors met the concerned authority of DC Office to discuss the issue and they assured to provide sailing of boats to all Islands within 3 days after which the protest was called off.

The NSUI State President has also written a letter to the Deputy Commissioner demanding to provide adequate boats for transporting all inter-islander students to their respective destinations on urgent basis.

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*If you reveal your secrets
to the wind you should not
blame the wind for
revealing them to the trees*
Kahlil Gibran

‘Mark’ and his troubles

Facebook recently changed its name to Meta. That is, Facebook will now be known as 'Meta'. In fact, for some time now, the social media giant platform, Facebook has been hounded by many controversies. Experts say that keeping in mind the notoriety of the company due to continuous controversies and its adverse effect on its business, the management devised a strategy to change the name of the company and changed the name of Facebook to Meta. However, even after the name change, the company's problems do not seem to be over. In fact, the American company Meta has been accused of antitrust for a long time in the US itself.

There are many allegations against the company of not giving opportunities to companies smaller than itself to grow. The company is accused of following a policy of merging other and smaller companies giving tough competition in any way possible. Now the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), a US agency in this matter, has taken a tough stand against 'Meta'. However, before proceeding now, it is important to know about the FTC. Actually, the FTC is an independent agency of the US government and the job of this agency is to ensure the safety of customers in the country. The FTC has won an antitrust case against Meta in a US court. Court allows FTC to hear case against Meta. In this case, the FTC says that 'Meta' wants to establish a monopoly in its business sector. This is the reason why the FTC wants to make the two popular platforms of 'Meta', WhatsApp and Instagram, independent of it. However, this case against Meta is not going to be that easy for the FTC. In order to win against Meta in court, the FTC must present strong evidence in its claim.

Only on the basis of the evidence it can defeat 'Meta'. If the FTC wins the court case against Meta, the company could lose ownership of its popular platforms WhatsApp and Instagram. Now let's talk about Facebook's business policy. The answer lies in the front lines as to how true the FTC's allegations of Facebook eliminating its rivals are. In fact, in 2012, Facebook bought Instagram for \$1 billion. After this, in the year 2014, Facebook also bought the social platform WhatsApp, which is rapidly gaining popularity among the people, for a huge amount of \$ 19 billion. Today both these platforms are operated under 'Meta' and both these platforms are very popular among the people. In this way, by buying two new and emerging companies, it not only curbed their growth prospects but also retained their monopoly on the platform. The important thing is that then these deals were approved after the approval of the same FTC of America. However, where this dispute between 'Meta' and the FTC will end, only time will decide. But it is certain that even after becoming 'Meta' from Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg's troubles do not seem to be diminishing at the moment.

Dried up new job opportunities in economy

REFLEX ACTION

Krishna Jha

our country too in 1969, Monopolistic and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, popularly known as MRTP Act "...was brought to provide that operation of the economic system does not result in concentration of economic power in hands of few. It was later repealed and came in its place Competition Act in 2002

It was dilution of MRTP Act that resulted in promotion of corporates like Ambanis and Adanis. But the MRTP remained the first anti-monopoly legislation in the country, to prohibit monopolistic and restrictive trade practices. Today, in contrast to it, in our democracy, we have nursed a king. It is not only the political power he wields, but also that which is inherent in the very basics, the economics. They are no more the invisible rulers, up and above board, they have shielded all the openings, hence they are no more of the people or from them, though by the people they are.

They belong to a whole new class that has swallowed up our all public sector units, small and medium level production units, got hold of banks, and now eyeing the relatively bigger public sector units, and thus, creating a new setting which is not a form of pure capitalism, since it never goes for investment, and also never needs pluralism, that is democracy. All the major decisions are taken unilaterally. Examples are multiple. Three agrarian laws were passed the same way and after 13 months were repealed also the same way. But MSP and several others have been withheld. They are deeply concerned about the



Japanese Macaques, also known as Snow Monkeys, gather to soak in a hot spring at Hakodate Tropical Botanical Garden in Hakodate, on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido---REUTERS

Omicron threatens the Public Health System

Omicron spread across the world has made the world understand: that vaccines alone do not prevent the spread of COVID-19; that people need to follow the five major recommendations – wearing well-fitted masks, safe distancing, avoiding crowds, cleaning hands, and opening windows; that the currently available vaccines need to be updated; and that only the government is capable of protecting the people and the private sector and therefore doing away with the public sector in favour of private sector is wrong.

The latest COVID-19 wave led by the new variant Omicron is considered as milder than the other variants. It escapes the immunity created by the present vaccines and therefore it has been threatening to overwhelm the health facilities and workers available for the patients. Omicron variant represents a “new west to east tidal wave”. Situation has become alarming, for example, in Europe, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) forecasts, over 50 per cent of the population will be infected with Omicron within six to eight weeks. In this case both the health workers and the health facilities will be overwhelmed.

In its situation update, experts from WHO has said that the data collected in recent weeks confirmed that Omicron is highly transmissible: “Because the mutations it has, enable it to adhere to human cells more easily, and it can infect even those who have been previously infected or vaccinated.”

However, it does not mean that vaccines are totally ineffective. WHO experts have said that the “currently approved vaccines do continue to provide good protection against severe disease and death, including for Omicron. That is why the WHO mantra

remains intact, that is – Vaccination, third doses or boosters, increased mask use, ventilation of crowded or closed spaces, and the application of new clinical protocol.

“Because of the unprecedented scale of transmission, we are now seeing rising COVID-19 hospitalisations. It is challenging health systems and service delivery in many countries where Omicron has spread at speed,” threatening to overwhelm many more, WHO has warned.

The interim statement of the WHO Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Vaccine Composition, which was established in September 2021 has said that current COVID-19 vaccines may need to be updated to ensure their continued effectiveness against Omicron and future variants. Even though, amid increased Omicron circulation, it has called for “urgent and broad access” to current vaccines globally, both for protection and to mitigate the emergence of new variants of concerns (VoCs).

Presently 18 member experts of this group are developing a framework to analyze the evidence on emerging VoCs “in the context of criteria that would trigger a recommendation to change COVID-19 vaccine strain composition and will advise WHO on updated vaccine compositions, as required.” They have said that vaccines that have a high impact on prevention of infection and transmission, in addition to

prevention of severe disease and death, are needed and should be developed.

“Until such vaccines are available, and as the SARS-CoV-2 virus evolves, the composition of current COVID-19 vaccines may need to be updated, to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines continue to provide WHO-recommended levels of protection against infection and disease by VOCs, including Omicron and future variants,” they statement read.

The WHO Technical Advisory Group will consider a change in vaccine composition to ensure doses continue to meet WHO criteria, including protection against severe disease, and to improve vaccine-induced protection.

It is here, the vaccine manufacturers have a great role to play, because the vaccines they produce need to be “based on strains that are genetically and antigenically close” to circulating variants. Additionally, the WHO Technical Group has said, they must protect against severe disease and death, and be more effective against infection, thus lowering virus transmission and the need for stringent public health and social measures. They have also encouraged the manufactures of vaccines to generate and share data on the performance of current and Omicron-specific vaccines so that informed decision can be taken as to when changes to vaccine composition may be required.

In the meantime the people need to wear

masks, avoid crowds, maintain safe distance, get vaccines as recommended, and do everything to lower the risk of infection, since we have limited number of health workers and medical facilities. Moreover, health professionals are also getting infected with speed, and we should keep in mind that lesser number of them will be available for medical care of too large number of patients to be attended to.

Governments need to be extra vigilant to prevent such situation, and they must be ready with contingency plans, and containment measures, apart from catering to the people's non-medical needs such as availability of food and other emergency items, especially for women, children, the old, and the poor.

Since, the private sector themselves needed help from the government during the crisis, it is clear that they are not capable of protecting the people. In this scenario, governments must not weaken the public sector in favour of private sector, because it was the public sector that helped the private sector to survive during the COVID-19 crisis not the other way round. Public expenditure must therefore be enhanced, and large scale privatisation must stop forthwith.

WHO has so far designated five variants of concern – Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Omicron – since the virus first emerged in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. Some experts see silver lining in the spread of Omicron signaling the end of virulent COVID-19. However, one cannot put ones guard off on such hopes. The WHO expert group has warned, “While the Omicron variant is spreading rapidly across the world, the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 is expected to continue and Omicron is unlikely to be the last VoC.” (IPA)

elections, hence the hurry, though they never considered Parliament the summit of people's power. It is their own class interest that ran supreme. And that is now exclusively financialisation. The recent steps taken by the government towards monetisation prove the same. It is dilution of public sector units, which is now almost over. Each of the units are facing the same. In last seven decades, many heavy industries were built up to cater to the needs of the country like steel units, mining for coal and other essentials. For transportation, roads were built, and for fuel, oil refineries were set up.

All these steps were taken to develop the country's infrastructure, to cater to the basic needs to evolve economy. With public money, the basics of industrial development were built. The tax money of the vast masses were spent to build roads, improve power sector, energy sector, health services, education, and many such initiatives.

The selling of these basics mean fragmentation of the economy itself. It does not stop there. With each sale, the government intends to usurp the entire revenue also. Imperialism today has moved in a big way against the very productive capacities that sustain it and also the society. So far capitalism had exploited mainly the workers and peasants. For the first time in 20th century, and in particular 21st century, financial capitalism is moving against big, small and medium entrepreneurs also on a massive scale, exploiting them to the maximum. Finance capital is going against the very mode of production which created it.

Contemporary capitalism is characterized by a historical split between productive and finance capital, central to contemporary crisis of imperialism, creating new bases for the program of democratic shifts in society. (IPA)

Conventional Crossword

1		2	3	4		5	6		7
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18			19	20				21	
		22				23			
24						25	26	27	
		28							
29						30			

ACROSS

- 1 Separates
- 5 Table-shaped hill
- 8 Public speaker
- 9 Thespian
- 10 Speaker's platform
- 11 Roofing items
- 12 Unwell
- 15 Fasting period
- 18 Hold questionable
- 21 Fish eggs
- 22 Game of skill
- 24 Outer covering
- 25 Presages
- 28 Lump of gold
- 29 Billiard rods
- 30 Not flighty

DOWN

- 1 Calm
- 2 Decay
- 3 Easy pace
- 4 Hindu garment
- 5 Mannequin
- 6 Rubber
- 7 Donkey
- 13 Behold!
- 14 Of the wolf
- 16 Denial
- 17 Tantalised
- 19 Additional payment
- 20 In the direction of
- 23 Ships' records
- 24 Dry, of champagne
- 26 Encountered
- 27 Greek letter

SUDOKU : 3404

2			7					
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Yesterday's Solution 3403

5	2	8	3	1	4	7	6	9
3	7	9	2	6	5	4	1	8
4	1	6	8	9	7	3	2	5
9	5	1	4	7	2	8	3	6
6	8	3	1	5	9	2	7	4
2	4	7	6	3	8	5	9	1
8	6	2	7	4	1	9	5	3
7	3	5	9	8	6	1	4	2
1	9	4	5	2	3	6	8	7

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1412

E	T	C	H		R	I	N	G	S
G		R	E	F	I	N	E		O
O	G	E	E		B	A	T	O	N
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A	M	I		P	L	E	A	S	E
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S			O		E	F	T	S	
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UK police arrest two teens over Texas synagogue siege in US

LONDON, JAN 17 /--/ Police in the UK said on Monday that they are questioning two teenagers as part of an ongoing investigation into the siege at a synagogue in the US state of Texas, which ended in the death of British hostage-taker Malik Faisal Akram.

Greater Manchester police confirmed that the suspect shot dead by the FBI during the standoff at the Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville was 44-year-old Akram, originally from the Blackburn area of Lancashire in northwest England.



He was demanding the release of Pakistani neuroscientist Afia Siddiqui, suspected of ties with Al Qaeda and currently serving an 86-year sentence after being convicted of trying to kill US military officers while in custody in Afghanistan. We can confirm that the suspect, who is deceased, is 44-year-old Malik Faisal Akram, originally from the Blackburn area of Lancashire, said assistant chief constable dominic scally for England's Counter Terror policing North West. "I can also confirm that Counter Terror Policing North West is assisting with the investigation being led by the US authorities. Police forces in the region will continue to liaise with their local communities, including the Jewish community, and will put in place any necessary measures to provide reassurance to them, he said.

The teenagers detained in south Manchester on Sunday evening in connection with the investigation cannot be named for legal reasons, but the force said they remain in custody for questioning . Scotland Yard also confirmed counter-terror officers were liaising with US authorities and the FBI.US President Joe Biden called the hostage-taking an "act of terror", with the UK condemning the attack soon after.My thoughts are with the Jewish community and all those affected by the appalling act in Texas, UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said on Twitter.We condemn this act of terrorism and anti-Semitism. We stand with the US in defending the rights and freedoms of our citizens against those who spread hate, she

said. According to reports from the US, Akram arrived in the country via New York's JFK International Airport two weeks ago. Akram's brother Gulbar confirmed his death in a statement carried on social media and also apologised to the victims, saying his brother had been suffering from mental health issues. In a statement, the brother said family members in Britain spent hours "liaising with Faisal" during the siege over the weekend, and that although he was "suffering from mental health issues we

were confident that he would not harm the hostages".Gulbar said: "We would like to say that we as a family do not condone any of his actions and would like to sincerely apologise wholeheartedly to all the victims involved in the unfortunate incident."We would also like to add that any attack on any human being be it a Jew, Christian or Muslim, etc is wrong and should always be condemned."Akram took four people hostage, including a rabbi, inside the synagogue in Colleyville at around 11 am local time on Saturday. One was freed after six hours before an FBI SWAT team entered the building at around 9 pm, shot the attacker dead, and released the other three unharmed. The rabbi held hostage in the attack, Charlie Cytron-Walker, said Akram became "increasingly belligerent and threatening" during the standoff.

The first part of the siege was captured on a Facebook Livestream of the morning shabbat prayers at the synagogue. On it, the hostage-taker was heard demanding the release of Afia Siddiqui and said he wanted to speak to her. Witnesses claim he referred to her as his sister, but John Floyd, of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said Siddiqui's brother was not involved.Floyd was quoted as saying: "This assailant has nothing to do with Dr Aafia, her family, or the global campaign to get justice for Dr Aafia."We want the assailant to know that his actions are wicked and directly undermine those of us who are seeking justice for Dr Aafia."According to reports, no explosive material was found on Akram and there are no signs of criminal history so far.(AP)

World shares mixed after China reports slowing growth

BANGKOK, JAN 17 /--/ World shares were mixed on Monday after China reported that its economy expanded at an 8.1 per cent annual pace in 2021, though growth slowed to half that level in the last quarter.

Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo and Shanghai advanced while Hong Kong and Seoul declined.The weakness in China's economy toward the end of 2021 is prompting suggestions Beijing should intervene to prop up growth with interest rate cuts or by injecting money into the economy through public works spending.Shortly before the growth data were released, the Chinese central bank announced a rate cut on medium-lending to commercial banks to the lowest level since 2020.Economic momentum remains weak amid repeated virus outbreaks and a struggling property sector," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a commentary. He expects China's policymakers to keep limits on lending relatively tight and control credit growth.The upshot is that policy easing is likely to soften the economic downturn rather than drive a rebound," he said.Slowing activity in China, the region's biggest economy, can chill growth throughout the region. Lockdowns and

other precautions imposed to combat outbreaks of coronavirus can also worsen shortages of key parts and components, adding to difficulties with shipping and supply chains.

The Shanghai Composite index gained 0.6per cent to 3,541.67, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 0.7 per cent to 24,218.43.South Korea's Kospi sank 1.1 per cent to 2,890.10 after North Korea fired two suspected ballistic missiles into the sea early Monday in its fourth weapons launch this month, South Korea's military said, with the apparent goal of demonstrating its military might amid paused diplomacy with the US and pandemic border closures.Germany's DAX gained 0.2 per cent to 15,910.54 and the CAC 40 in Paris also was up 0.2per cent, at 7,156.53. Britain's FTSE 100 jumped 0.7per cent to 7,592.79. The future for the S&P 500 picked up 0.2 per cent while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average edged 0.1 per cent higher.In Asian trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 advanced 0.7 per cent to 28,333.52 as the government reported machinery orders rose in November as private investment and manufacturing activity improved during a lull in

coronavirus outbreaks. Shipbuilders orders surged 170 per cent.Australia's S&P/ASX 200 climbed 0.3per cent to 7,417.30.On Friday, the S&P 500 eked out a 0.1 per cent gain, closing at 4,662.85. The tech-heavy Nasdaq surged 0.6per cent to 14,893.75. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.6 per cent to 35,911.81. Smaller company stocks also bounced back from an early slide.The Russell 2000 index rose 0.1per cent, to 2,162.46.A rally in technology stocks, plus gains in energy and other sectors, helped outweigh declines in banks and elsewhere in the market on a day when investors were mainly focused on a mix of company earnings reports and discouraging data on retail sales.

The mixed finish capped a week of choppy trading on Wall Street that deepened the market's January slump. The benchmark S&P 500, which soared 26.9per cent in 2021, is now about 2.8per cent below the all-time high it set on Jan 3.The yield on the 10-year Treasury was steady at 1.79per cent.

The price of US crude oil rose 30 cents to 84.12 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. On Friday, it rose 2.1per cent, helping to send energy stocks higher. (AP)

Two Indians, one Pakistani killed in Abu Dhabi tankers fire caused by 'small flying objects'

DUBAI, JAN 17 /--/ Two Indians and a Pakistani national were killed and six others injured on Monday after a fire caused by "small flying objects", possibly drones, triggered an explosion that hit three petroleum tankers in the UAE's capital Abu Dhabi, police said.

Another minor fire broke out in the new construction area of the Abu Dhabi International Airport, according to the state-run Emirates news agency (WAM).It said that the fire that broke out in the Musaffah ICAD 3 area near the Abu Dhabi National oil company (ADNOC) resulted in the explosion of three petroleum tankers. "Preliminary investigations suggest that the cause of the fires are small flying objects, possibly belonging to drones, that fell in the two areas, it said, adding that the fire has been brought under control.Abu Dhabi police identified the dead as two Indian nationals and one Pakistani. Another six persons sustained



mild and moderate injuries, police said, without disclosing their identity.The Indian Embassy in UAE said that the mission is in close touch with concerned UAE authorities for further details."UAE authorities have informed that the explosion at Mussafah, near ADNOC's storage tanks, has led to 3

casualties, which includes 2 Indian nationals. The Mission @IndembAbuDhabi is in close touch with concerned UAE authorities for further details, the Indian Embassy in UAE tweeted.Authorities have launched an extensive investigation into the cause of the fire and the

circumstances surrounding it, police said."However, there are no significant damages resulting from the two accidents," Wam reported.

The UAE didn't immediately blame anyone for the attack. However, Yemen's Houthi rebels have claimed that they targeted the United Arab Emirates, without



giving details. Yemen's Houthi group has taken responsibility for several attacks on Saudi Arabian oil facilities in the past. The UAE is part of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen fighting Houthi rebels.(PTI)

China reopens rail freight traffic with North Korea

BEIJING, JAN 17 /--/ China has restored railway freight traffic with North Korea that had been suspended over pandemic concerns, its foreign ministry said on Monday. Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the connection across the Yalu River between China's Dandong and Sinuiju in North Korea had been restored after friendly consultation between the two sides. Zhao said normal trade would be maintained while pandemic controls stay in place, but gave no other details. Already under United Nations and US sanctions, North Korea has closed its borders to prevent Covid-19 infections placing its fragile health care system under further stress.With little information coming out of the headline communist state, it's unclear how much it has suffered from the pandemic. China remains the North's main ally and source of economic aid, despite signing on to sanctions imposed over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programmes. (AP)

Pakistan NSA to visit Kabul today; to discuss border fencing issue, humanitarian crisis with Taliban regime

ISLAMABAD, JAN 17 /--/ Pakistan's National security adviser Moeed Yusuf will lead an inter-ministerial delegation to Afghanistan on Tuesday to discuss the issue of border-fencing and take stock of the humanitarian needs of the war-torn country



Moeed Yusuf

officials told the Dawn newspaper.Concerns over Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis have been discussed in the United Nations to avert a humanitarian crisis.On January 13, UN Secretary-General antonio guterres warned that millions of Afghans were on the verge of death, urging the international community to fund the UN's USD 5 billion humanitarian appeal, release the country's frozen assets and reignite its banking system to avert a major economic and social collapse.One of the key challenges confronting Afghanistan is the near-complete exodus of skilled labour, affecting its health and infrastructure sectors.

Pakistani officials said they were planning to relocate Afghan refugees who have been educated and trained in Pakistan to Afghanistan.Officials said the issue of border-fencing along the Durand Line will also be discussed by Yusuf amidst differences between Islamabad and Kabul.Pakistan has completed almost 90 per cent fencing work along the 2,670-km international border to stop an easy passage for militants.However, Afghanistan has contested the century-old British-era boundary demarcation that splits families on either side.Last month, videos began to circulate on social media, purportedly showing members of the Afghan Taliban uprooting a portion of the fence along the border, claiming that they were erected inside Afghan territory.(PTI)

Indonesian officials make rare visit to Israel on Covid-19

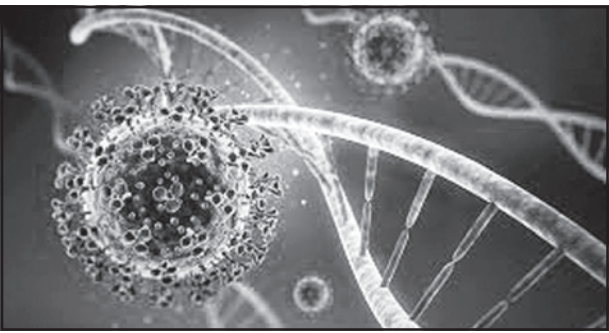
JESUSALEM, JAN 17 /--/ A delegation of Indonesian officials made a rare visit to Israel recently to discuss coronavirus strategies, despite the countries not having diplomatic relations, Israel's Army Radio reported Monday. The Indonesian health officials aimed to learn how to deal with the coronavirus pandemic and met with Israeli officials, the report said. The report did not specify when the visit took place. Israel's foreign ministry would not confirm the report, but said that Israel believes in international cooperation in every regard to the fight against the coronavirus" and is prepared to share information and experience.Israel and Indonesia do not have diplomatic relations, but for years there have been back-channel overtures to establish official ties. Indonesia has refused to normalise relations with Israel until the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, and has been a staunch supporter of the Palestinians. Last month during a visit to Jakarta, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reportedly discussed with Indonesian officials the normalization of ties with Israel.(AP)

Gene variant that protects against Covid-19 identified

LONDON, JAN 17 /--/ Researchers have identified a specific gene variant that protects against severe Covid-19 infection. An international team led by researchers at Karolinska Institutet in Sweden pinpointed the variant by studying people of different ancestries.The study, published in the journal Nature Genetics, shows that genes can influence whether we become severely affected or only suffer mild illness from Covid-19.Previous studies on mainly people of European ancestry have found that individuals carrying a particular segment of DNA have a 20 per cent lower risk of developing a critical Covid-19 infection.This DNA segment encodes genes in the immune system, and is inherited from Neanderthals in about half of all

people outside Africa, the researchers said. However, this region of DNA is packed with numerous genetic variants, which makes it challenging to disentangle the exact protective variant, they said. Identifying this variant could potentially serve as a target for medical treatment against severe Covid-19 infection, according to the researchers. To identify this specific gene variant, they looked for individuals carrying only parts of this DNA segment. Since the Neandertal inheritance occurred after the ancient migration out of Africa, the

researchers focussed on individuals with African ancestry



ancestry who lack heritage from the Neanderthals and therefore also the majority of this DNA segment.A small piece of this DNA region is, however, the same in both people of African and European ancestries.

The researchers found that

individuals of predominantly African ancestry had the same protection as those of European ancestry, which allowed them to pinpoint a specific gene variant of particular interest. "The fact that individuals of African descent had the same protection allowed us to identify the unique variant in the DNA that actually protects from Covid-

19 infection," said the first author of study Jennifer Huffman, a researcher at the VA Boston Healthcare System in the US.The analysis included a total of 2,787 hospitalised Covid-19 patients of African ancestry and 130,997 people in a control group from six

cohort studies.Eighty per cent of individuals of African ancestry carried the protective variant, the researchers said.The outcome was compared with a previous, larger study of individuals of European heritage.According to the researchers, the protective gene variant (rs10774671-G) determines the length of the protein encoded by the gene OASI.

Prior studies have shown that the longer variant of the protein is more effective at breaking down SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19."That we are beginning to understand the genetic risk factors in detail is key to developing new drugs against Covid-19," said study co-author Brent Richards, a professor at McGill University in Canada. (PTI)

ECHO WORLD

THE ECHO OF INDIA

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Vaccination drive for 12-14 age group likely from March: Top Govt expert



NEW DELHI, JAN 17 /--/ India may begin inoculating children in the 12-14 age group against Covid-19 in March as the 15-18 population is likely to get fully vaccinated by then, Dr N K Arora, chairman of the Covid-19 working group of NTAGI, said on Monday.

Of the estimated 7.4 crore (7,40,57,000) population in the 15-18 age bracket, over 3.45 crore have received the first dose of Covaxin so far and their second dose is due in 28 days, Dr Arora said. "Adolescents in this age group have been actively participating in the inoculation process, and going by this pace of vaccination, the rest of the beneficiaries in the 15-18 age group are likely to be

covered with the first dose by January-end and subsequently their second dose is expected to be done by February-end," said the chairman of the Covid working group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI). Once the 15-18 age group is covered, he said, the government is likely to take a policy decision for initiating the vaccination drive for the 12-14 age group in March, he said. According to him, there is an estimated 7.5 crore population in the 12-14 age group. Provisional vaccination reports till 7 am on Monday showed that with more than 39 lakh doses being administered in a span of 24 hours, the cumulative number

has exceeded 157.20 crore doses. According to government data, over 3.45 crore first doses have been given to children in the 15-18 years age group so far. The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with healthcare workers (HCWs) getting inoculated in the first phase. The vaccination of frontline workers (FLWs) started from February 2, 2021. The next phase of Covid-19 vaccination commenced from March 1 last year for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specified co-morbid conditions. The country launched vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years

from April 1, 2021. The government then decided to expand its vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 to be vaccinated from May 1. The next phase of Covid-19 vaccination has commenced from January 3 this year for adolescents in the age group of 15-18 years. India began administering the precaution dose -- a third jab of Covid-19 vaccine -- to healthcare, frontline workers including personnel deployed for election duty and those aged 60 and above with comorbidities from January 10 amid the country witnessing a spike in coronavirus infections, driven mainly by the Omicron variant of the virus. (PTI)

No person can be forced to get vaccinated against their wishes, Centre tells SC

NEW DELHI, JAN 17 /--/ Covid-19 inoculation guidelines issued by the Union health ministry do not envisage forcible vaccination without obtaining the consent of an individual, the Centre has told the Supreme Court. The health ministry in an affidavit filed before the apex court submitted that India's vaccination programme is the largest in the world and as on January 11, 2022, a total of 1,52,95,43,602 doses have been administered. It said that 90.84 per cent of the eligible adult population has received their first dose of the vaccine and 61 per cent has received their second dose as well. "Furthermore, a total of 23,768 doses have been administered to disabled persons who have voluntarily chosen to be identified as such by using their Unique Disability ID Card/Disability Certificate for registration at the time of their vaccination," it said. On the issue of exempting persons with disabilities from producing vaccination certificates, the Centre told the apex court that it has not issued any SOP that makes it mandatory to carry the vaccination certificate for any purpose. The Centre said this in its affidavit filed in response to a plea by NGO Evara Foundation seeking door-to-door, priority Covid-19 vaccination for persons with disabilities. "It is submitted that the direction and guidelines released by the Government of India and the ministry of health and family welfare do not envisage any forcible vaccination without obtaining consent of the concerned individual. "It is submitted that vaccination for Covid-19 is of larger public interest in view of the ongoing pandemic situation," the affidavit filed by the health ministry said. The ministry

said that "it is duly advised, advertised and communicated through various print and social media platforms that all citizens should get vaccinated and systems and processes have been designed to facilitate the same." "However, no person can be forced to be vaccinated against their wishes," it said. On the issue of door-to-door vaccination, the affidavit submitted that guidance has been provided to states and union territories to undertake meticulous, need-based planning so that Near to Home Vaccine Centres (NHCVCs) strategy is undertaken at block or urban area level and identification of NHCVC sites done according to guidelines. The location of NHCVCs is to be done by district/urban task forces so as to ensure maximum reach of services to the eligible population, it said. The health ministry stressed on the need for continuing the use of face masks or face covers, and said the "Har Ghar Dastak Abhiyan" was being followed for door-to-door vaccination of eligible beneficiaries, including persons with disabilities.

It also apprised the apex court that such persons not having ID cards are also eligible for vaccination since the CoWIN website provides the facility for creation of special vaccination sessions for this purpose. "It is submitted that the CoWIN public interface is available in 11 regional languages in addition to English. It is also submitted that open files of awareness materials have been shared with the states for translation, publication and dissemination in any language/accessible format," the affidavit said. (PTI)



A health worker collects a swab sample from a child amidst the spread of the COVID-19, at a testing centre inside a hospital in New Delhi — Photo : Reuters

India fighting another Covid wave maintaining economic growth: PM

NEW DELHI, JAN 17 /--/ Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said India fighting another COVID-19 wave with full alertness and caution while maintaining economic growth. Modi said this at World Economic Forum's online event. Modi said India has given world a bouquet of hope consisting of trust towards democracy, technology to empower 21st century and of talent. According to the Prime Minister, India focused on reforms in right way. He said global experts have praised India's decisions and we will fulfil world's expectations from us. India was once known for licence raj; Today, we're encouraging ease of doing business, reducing govt involvement in businesses, he said. The Prime Minister went on to say the country followed vision of 'One Earth, One Health' and provided medicines, vaccines to several countries during Covid-19. Addressing investors across the world, he said it's best time to invest in India.

In the Prime Minister's words on path to make India self-reliant, the government's focus is not only on making processes easier, but also to incentivise investment and production. India's policies, decision making based not just on present needs, but also on goals of next 25 years, Modi said at online Davos Agenda summit. (PTI)

AT A GLANCE

Kolkata International Book Fair deferred, to start from Feb 28

KOLKATA: Kolkata International Book Fair (KIBF), one of the biggest literary festivals in the country has been deferred, keeping in view the ongoing Covid surge and the four civic polls, to be held on February 12. The KIBF, which was earlier scheduled to start from January 31, will now be inaugurated on February 28, at a gap of almost one month. The Publishers and Booksellers Guild, the organising body of the KIBF today made this announcement. According to sources, the announcement was made after top officials of Publishers and Booksellers Guild had a meeting with chief minister Mamata Banerjee. Though the West Bengal government, in its Covid guidelines issued on January 15 had said that fairs could be organised on open grounds maintaining Covid protocols, a section of publishers were not in favour of the KIBF to be started on January 31. While some were skeptical about footfall of people amid the massive surge in Covid cases, others questioned whether permission for the fair could be obtained since it is going to be held in Salt Lake, which is a part of Bidhannagar Municipality, which is going to polls on February 12. (EOIC)

Wrong precedent to criticise Centre for states' tableaux exclusion: Govt sources

NEW DELHI, JAN 17 /--/ Slamming the states for alleging that the exclusion of their tableaux from the Republic Day parade was an insult, Union government sources said it is a wrong precedent, and stressed that it is not the Centre but an expert committee that makes the shortlist. The proposals of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal were rejected by the subject expert committee after due process and deliberations, they said on Monday. "This is a wrong precedent adopted by chief ministers of states to portray the outcome of an objective process as a flashpoint between the Centre and the states. This goes a long way in harming the country's federal structure," a Union government functionary said. He noted that a total of 56 proposals had come from states and central ministries and out of these 21 were shortlisted. It is natural for more proposals to be rejected than those accepted given the paucity of time, sources said. Defence ministry officials also asserted that a similar process of selection is adopted every year. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and Tamil Nadu

chief minister M K Stalin have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the omission of their states' tableaux and sought his intervention. Excluding the tableau would deeply hurt the sentiments and patriotic feelings of the people of Tamil Nadu, Stalin said. Expressing shock over the exclusion of West Bengal's tableau, which focussed on Subhas Chandra Bose on his 125th birth anniversary year, Mamata said such a move would cause "pain" to the people of her state. Several politicians in Kerala have also taken up the issue of the exclusion of their state's tableau to criticise the Centre. A source added: "This is unmistakably linked to regional pride and projected as an insult to the people of the state by the central government. This script also plays out almost every year. This is a wrong precedent adopted by CMs of states to portray an outcome of an objective process as a flashpoint between the Centre and the states." This goes a long way in harming the country's federal structure, he said, adding that these chief ministers have perhaps "no positive agenda of their own that they have to resort to the same old trick using

misinformation year after year". The tableau proposals received from various states and central ministries are evaluated in a series of meetings of the expert committee comprising of eminent people in the field of art, culture, sculpture, music, architecture and choreography among others, they said. The committee examines the proposals on the basis of theme, concept, design and visual impact before making its recommendations. Due to time constraints, only some of the proposals can be accepted, they added. It should be, however, noted that the tableau proposals of Kerala were accepted through the same process and system under the same Modi government in 2018 and 2021, and those of Tamil Nadu in 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020 and 2021. The tableau proposals of West Bengal were accepted in 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2021, they said. With this year's tableau of the Central Public Works Department, which comes under the central government, including Bose in its theme, any question of his insult does not even arise, the sources said. (PTI)

State relaxes Covid curbs, allows gyms to operate

KOLKATA, JAN 17 /--/ The West Bengal government on Monday announced certain relaxations to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, allowing opening of gyms and holding of 'jattras' (traditional theatres) on some conditions, according to an order. Gyms can open at 50 per cent capacity in any given time till 9 pm provided that the staff and users are fully vaccinated or are RTPCR negative. The government also allowed 'jattras' to be held till 9 pm only at 50 per cent capacity in an outdoor venue, the order issued said. It added that in case a 'jatra' is held indoors, a maximum of 200 people or 50 per cent of the capacity, whichever is lower, would be permitted. The state government allowed outdoor shooting for films, TV programmes with adherence to physical distancing and Covid appropriate protocols, the order stated. The West Bengal government had on Saturday extended the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions till January 31 but allowed fairs on open grounds in a restricted manner with strict adherence to Covid safety norms. (PTI)



List of relaxations allowed by West Bengal Govt:

- Gyms can operate with 50% capacity up to 9 pm. Staff and users have to be fully vaccinated or RTPCR negative tested.
- Jatra can be allowed with up to 50% people till 9 pm in case of an outdoor event. For indoor event, 200 people will be allowed.
- Outdoor shooting for films and TV programmes in state will be allowed with Covid protocols.

Kathak legend Birju Maharaj passes away



NEW DELHI, JAN 17 /--/ Kathak doyen Birju Maharaj, who took the classical Indian dance form to the world and helped make it accessible for generations of students and audiences, died at his home here in the early hours of Monday. He would have been 84 next month.

Maharaj, as he was popularly known, died surrounded by his family and disciples, laughing and smiling till the very end. They were playing antakshari after dinner when he suddenly took ill, his granddaughter Ragini Maharaj told news agency PTI. Birju Maharaj, one of India's best known artistes who was also a thumri exponent and even voiced a song for Satyajit Ray's Shatranj Ke Khiladi

, was from Lucknow's Kalka-Bindadin Gharana. He is survived by five children, three daughters and two sons, and five grandchildren. He had been suffering from a kidney ailment and was under dialysis treatment for the last month due to high diabetes. He probably died of a cardiac arrest, his granddaughter said. "He was with us when this happened. He had his dinner and we were playing antakshari because he loved old music. He was lying down and suddenly his breathing became uneven. We think it was a cardiac arrest as he was also a heart patient. This happened between 12.15 and 12.30 am. It must have been just a minute or so. We rushed to the hospital but unfortunately, we

could not save him. He died before reaching the hospital," Ragini said. "Two of his disciples and his two granddaughters, my younger sister Yasashashwini and me, were with him when this happened. He was laughing and smiling in his last moments," she said. Condolences poured in as news came in of the death of the Kathak maestro, who would have been 84 on February 4. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his death is an "irreparable loss" to the entire art world. "Deeply saddened by the demise of Pandit Birju Maharaj ji, who gave Indian dance a special recognition world over. My condolences to his family and fans in this hour of grief," the Prime Minister said. (PTI)

Medical Oxygen Generation Plant installed at Jamalpur Railway Main Hospital

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ Railway Hospitals of Eastern Railway are rendering relentless efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. Dedicated & devoted doctors, nurses, paramedical staff are striving hard day & night for treating corona infected patients. In an endeavour to fight the corona war in more meaningful way, a PSA (Pressure Swing Adsorber) technology based Oxygen Generation Plant of 350 litres per minute with immaculate purity of 93% (approx.) has been installed at Railway Main Hospital, Jamalpur. This will suffice the requirement of covid-19 patients admitted in the hospital.



It will prove to be a life saving asset for Railway personnels and their dependent family members.

For power backup, standby DG set is also installed to ensure uninterrupted supply of liquid medical oxygen to



all the patients through this plant. Further, in case of additional requirement of oxygen, this hospital is

already equipped with 34 Nos. of oxygen concentrators and 50 Nos. of D-type and 84 Nos. of B-type oxygen

cylinders.

Commission of this plant has made the Jamalpur Hospital the unique hospital in this densely populated locality to have such a state-of-the-art facility. The plant has been installed by M/s. Avalon Power Pvt. Ltd. at a approximate cost of ₹90 lakhs. Since the main hospital at Jamalpur and its five Health Units is serving approximately 45000 Railway beneficiaries including serving staff, retired employees and their dependents, installation of such a stand out setup at Jamalpur will definitely facilitate Railways to fight COVID in a better way and at the same time provide a sense of security amongst Railway employees.

PoliciCue, tech focused insurance broker launched today

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ PoliciCue, an offering of PoliciCue Insurance Brokers Private Limited announced today that it has begun its operations after getting Direct Insurance broker license from IRDAI. PoliciCue plans to simplify the lives of people by providing a one-stop-shop for all types of insurance be it Health, Life & Motor Insurance etc. With the help of their highly innovative insurance platform, PoliciCue aims to make the process of buying insurance online easier and more convenient for their clients by making exhaustive use of technology and world class insurance related services, sources informed.

PoliciCue have an experienced and well-trained team of experts in various fields including underwriting, claims support, IT to create a multidisciplinary environment that will help better serve its clients. PoliciCue's core team consists of industry professionals having collective insurance industry experience of more than 100 years, sources said.

"We are very excited about the start of our operations, and we are sure of bringing a difference in insurance buying experience with extensive use of technology and support services by experience team of industry professional for our valued customers" said Sanjay Vats, CEO of PoliciCue Insurance Brokers. The need is for an unbiased approach keeping customers at the centre while ensuring quality insurance advisory and customer services said Sanjay Vats, CEO of PoliciCue Insurance Brokers

"What we do is help people find solutions to the unique risks that we all face in our daily lives. We work on a one-on-one basis to figure out what you need and then find the policy that best suits your needs. We work with a number of different companies to find the best policy for you, whether it is car insurance, home insurance, health insurance or something else, said Vikas Mathur, Director & Head-Marketing of PoliciCue Insurance Brokers.

"Our focus would be to ensure end to end services for our customers including reviewing the gap in insurance coverage and advising the best suited plans. We would provide specialised assistance to our customers in case of claims" said Vishwa B. Rao, Director & Head-Technical.

Metro to run 138 services on R-Day

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ Metro will run 138 services (69 UP + 69 DN) on 26.01.2022 (Republic Day) on North-South Corridor. Out of these services, 133 services (65 UP + 68 DN) will run in between Kavi Subhash and Dakshineswar. First Service:

At 07:00 hrs from Dumdum to Dakshineswar. (No change)
At 07:00 hrs from Kavi Subhash to Dakshineswar. (No change)
At 07:00 hrs from Dumdum to Kavi Subhash. (No change)
At 07:00 hrs from Dakshineswar to Kav

iSubhash. (No change)
Last Service:
At 20:48 hrs from Dakshineswar to Kavi Subhash. (No Change)
At 21:00 hrs from Dumdum to Kavi Subhash. (No Change)
At 21:00 hrs from Kavi Subhash to Dakshineswar. (No Change)
Only Smart Card

holders will be able to travel in the Metro. No tokens will be issued. Commuters are requested to maintain social distancing and all other Covid protocols in the Metro premises. East-West Metro services will remain unchanged, sources informed.

Fly Ash Freight Traffic starts from Siuri



EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ In pursuance to the ER's continuous endeavour for increasing freight loading & earnings, Asansol Division has started loading of fly ash from Siuri goods shed today (17.1.2022). This originating freight from ER will travel through 1446 km towards its destination point in N. F. Railway at Belonia adding one more commodity in freight basket.

ER's Asansol Division has taken a pro-active approach to induct fly ash cargo from Bakreswar Thermal Power Station for its successful marketing in N. F. Railway jurisdiction.

Additional freight traffic expected from Siuri siding with this fly ash cargo is expected as four rakes per month with an expected additional revenue of ₹2 crore per month. Thus, such long lead freight traffic will contribute to the total revenue of ER



and will help in continuing the increasing trend of total earnings of Eastern Railway.

In the month of December 2021, Asansol Division has registered a freight loading of 3.51 million tonnes, registering a growth of 5.01% over December last year. From April to December 2021, ER's Asansol Division loaded 28.13 million tonnes of freight traffic which is 3.99% more over previous year while the revenue

earned during April to December in this financial year has shown a growth of 18.63% with respect to corresponding period of previous year.

It may be reiterated that in the ongoing financial year, the total originating earning of ER recorded as ₹6155 crore during the period April to December 2021 in comparison to ₹3869 crore earned during April to December 2020 registering a sharp increase of 59% over previous financial year.

Train regulation due to Traffic and Power Block for construction of RUB

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ For construction of Road Under Bridge (RUB) at LC Gate No. NC-111, 107 and NC-99 of Katihar Division in Northeast Frontier Railway, traffic and power block for 5 hours from 08:30 hrs. to 13:30 hrs. over UP line on 21.01.22 & from 7:00 hrs. to 12:00 hrs. over Down line on 23.01.22 at LC Gate No. NC-111 and for 7 hours from 07:00 hrs. to 14:00 hrs. over both UP & Down line at LC Gate No. NC-107 & NC-99 on 13.02.22 has been planned.

Consequently, the following arrangements in train running has been made:-

Cancellation:
*05702 Katihar - Malda Town Passenger Special (Journey Commencing on 12.02.2022)
*05701 Malda Town - Katihar Passenger Special (Journey Commencing on 13.02.2022)

Short Termination/ Origination:
*13033 Howrah - Katihar Express (Journey Commencing on 12.02.2022) will be short terminated at Malda Town station, cancelling its journey between Malda Town and Katihar.
*13034 Katihar - Howrah Express (Journey Commencing on 13.02.2022) will be short originated from Malda Town station, cancelling its journey between Katihar and Malda Town.

Rescheduling:
*13174 Agartala - Sealdah Kanchanjunga Express (Journey Commencing on 12.02.2022) will be rescheduled at 11:00 hrs. instead of 08:05 hrs.
*12364 Haldibari - Kolkata Superfast Express (Journey Commencing on 13.02.2022) will be rescheduled at 10:00 hrs. instead of 08:30 hrs.

Moreover, 13174 Agartala - Sealdah Kanchanjunga Express (Journey Commencing on 22.01.2022) will be controlled by 30 minutes enroute.

Increase in frequency

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ For the convenience of the passengers, the frequency of 12323/12324 Howrah - Barmer - Howrah Express has been increased from Weekly to Bi-Weekly with existing timings, stoppages and composition. 12323 Howrah - Barmer Express will run on Tuesdays & Fridays w.e.f. 25.01.2022 while 12324 Barmer - Howrah Express will run on Wednesdays & Saturdays w.e.f. 29.01.2022. Booking of tickets for the additional run will be notified shortly. (EOIC)

Train rescheduled

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ For construction of Limited Height Subway (LHS) in Madhupur - Giridih section of Asansol Division, 08 hours (09:35 hrs. to 17:35 hrs.) Power & Traffic block at Giridih station has been planned on 18.01.2022 (Tuesday). Consequently, 03525 Madhupur - Giridih MEMU Special (Journey Commencing on 18.01.2022) will be rescheduled by 30 minutes. (EOIC)

Tree plantation drive conducted by RPF

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ As a part of celebrating 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', Metro RPF conducted a 'Tree Plantation'



drive at Noapara and Mahanayak Uttam Kumar today i.e. on 17.01.2022 in order to save the environment and life. In this drive, RPF personnel planted saplings at Noapara Carshed and Mahanayak Uttam Kumar station area, maintaining all Covid protocols to mark the occasion.

Apart from this, 'No Mask, No Metro' campaign was also organized at different stations and inside the running Metros today to sensitize all Metro users to wear mask and follow all Covid protocols, while travelling in the Metro. (EOIC)

Level crossing no 147 eliminated

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ LC Gate No 147/C/E was situated in between Murshidabad and Jiagan station at km 201/5-7 in Krishnanagar-Lalgola section of Sealdah Division of Eastern Railway. The level crossing gate was having TVU of 15228 as per census of Nov-2021. The LC gate has been closed by providing LHS using 2 no.140 T railway crane and 6 nos excavators.

Placement of RCC boxes was done by cut and cover method and completed in a Mega Block of 10 hrs amidst ongoing pandemic while observing all Covid precautions. The work of placement of segmental boxes were sanctioned at a cost of Rs 2.25 cr and has now been completed by a team comprising of Engineering, Operating and Electrical TRD department on Sunday in a 10 hrs Mega block. The LHS has been installed in the same alignment as that of the level crossing leading to the closure of the level crossing with immediate effect. With the closure of LC 147, Sealdah division has closed 3 level crossings the current financial year.

cancer related deaths in India. A regular health checkup often involves a Pap smear test. It is a routine cervical cancer screening procedure and women should get a Pap test regularly from the age of 21.

In general to reduce cervical cancer risk, the recommendation is that if you are:

*21-29 years old, get a Pap test once every 3 years.

*30-65 years old, get a Pap or HPV test once every 3 years.

*Older than 65 years old, you may not need Pap tests anymore.

There is also another myth that if you have HPV,

you will get cervical cancer. That's not true. Usually, HPV clears up from our immune system by itself. In a small number of women, the virus stays in the body and over time causes cervical cancer. Dr. Lakshmi Rathna M, MBBS, MD (OBG & Gyne), DGO, PGDMLS, FICOG, Sr. Consultant Obstetrician and Gynecologist at Ankura Hospitals for Women and Children says, "You can safely take the HPV vaccine until the age of 26 years old. You can speak to your doctor about the vaccine, as its administered on a case by case basis."

EOI CORRESPONDENT

MALIGAON, JAN 17/--/ The incident of derailment site of 15633 Bikaner - Guwahati Express witnessed many admirable deeds. The N. F. Railway acted fast in the first hour, the most crucial hour of any accident. This led to saving many important lives. Empathizing with the passengers and realising their immediate need for finances, Railway has paid ex-gratia payment at the shortest possible time, within hours of the accident to all the injured passengers.

Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister of Railways, Communications, Electronics

and Information Technology himself reached the accident site to have an on the spot assessment. He also visited hospitals and interacted with



the admitted passengers. Minister himself assured best possible health care facilities to all admitted passengers. One of the injured

passengers, Kuldeep Rawat, upon interaction with Minister of Railways, Ashwini Vaishnaw at the Jalpaiguri Super Specialty Hospital, mentioned that his luggage was lost during the accident. Mr Vaishnaw immediately activated the Railway machinery and his luggage was soon found and handed over to his caretaker and relative Arun Kumar. Minister of Railways while visiting the injured passengers at hospitals met Safikul Ali, hailing from Dhula of Assam who did not have mobile phone to communicate with his family. The Minister took help from his other ministry and sent a postman to his native village.

After failure to locate any family member by the postman, an announcement was made through the mosque, usually used for namaaz. Through this announcement, his family members were informed and communicated with railway authorities. Thus, praiseworthy initiatives by the Minister touched the heart of everyone.

ART (Accident Relief Train) & ARME (Accident Relief Medical Equipment Van) staff of N. F. Railway did exemplary work during rescue operation which led to saving many lives. On receipt of the information, senior railway officials along

with ART rushed towards the site from New Jalpaiguri and New Alipurduar jumped into the rescue operation. Injured passengers were brought to



the nearest hospitals and timely medical attention was paid to them. Thereafter, stranded passengers were sent to their destination stations by a special train. All

stranded passengers were provided with tea, drinking water, biscuits, snacks, dinner packets etc. Passengers were satisfied for quick rescue and arrangement of alternative travel arrangement and also providing food for all by railway authority.

Restoration work was done on war footing for normalization of train movement under the supervision of Anshul Gupta, General Manager of N. F. Railway. The entire railway fraternity worked 24x7 without any break that resulted to restoration of the train movement through the accident affected section at the shortest possible time.

Cervical Cancer: A deadly yet preventable disease

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JAN 17/--/ Did you know that cervical cancer is not hereditary? A lot of people believe in this myth and it is precisely these misconceptions that we wanted to address with our cervical cancer awareness campaign", says Dr. Lakshmi Rathna M, MBBS, MD (OBG & Gyne), DGO, PGDMLS, FICOG, Sr. Consultant Obstetrician and Gynecologist at Ankura Hospitals for Women and Children.

An estimated 123,907 cervical cancer cases are recorded every year in India

and 77348 die due to it. This number might be an underestimate as many cases remain undiagnosed in rural and impoverished areas. Experts estimate that approximately 1 in 53 Indian women will get cervical cancer during their lifetime and currently, India accounts for nearly one-third of the global cervical cancer deaths.

January has been designated as cervical cancer awareness month worldwide and on this account, let's look at some pertinent information about this disease. Cervical cancer is an abnormal tissue growth in the cells of a woman's cervix and most

cases are caused by the sexually-transmitted human papillomavirus (HPV), which is preventable by taking the HPV vaccine. Cervical cancer develops very slowly over the course of many years. If the changes in the cervical cells are found in the early stages, it can be diagnosed and treated. If not, the cancer cells will spread to other parts of the body and it will become deadly.

Vaccination for the prevention of cervical cancer provides protection against multiple HPV variants. Two licensed vaccines are available in India. Vaccination can be done in



girls from the age of 9 years onwards. The HPV vaccine is known to be most effective

before women become sexually active, which is before they get exposed to the virus. Thus, just like many other vaccinations that a child receives, this too can be planned in consultation with an expert. If not given at an earlier age, then the vaccine can be administered till the age of 26 years for protection. Vaccination is also approved for women from 27 to 45 years. But, at this stage, women should discuss it with their gynaecologist to know whether they should receive it.

You might be at higher risk for cervical cancer, if you:

* Started having sex

before age 16 or within a year of starting your period

* Have multiple sexual partners

* Take birth control pills, especially for longer than 5 years

* Have a weakened immune system

* Have a sexually transmitted disease (STD)

* Smoke cigarettes

There are a few ways to reduce the risk of cervical cancer and we can do our part by getting regular health checkups, especially between the ages of 30 and 39 as statistics inform that women of these ages account for the majority of cervical-



Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic poses for a selfie after landing at Dubai Airport after the Australian Federal Court upheld a government decision to cancel his visa to play in the Australian Open, in Dubai — Photo : Reuters

ISL: Odisha FC look for new dawn, Marcellinho spark for lowly NorthEast United

MARGAO, JAN 17 /--/ Odisha FC will look for a new dawn after parting ways with coach Kiko Ramirez when they take on fellow stragglers NorthEast United FC in the Indian Super League here on Tuesday. Odisha parted ways with Ramirez after their last game against Kerala Blasters which they lost, finding themselves in ninth position with 13 points from 10 games. Kino Garcia was announced as his interim replacement and on Tuesday will have a job at hand to resurrect the ship against a NorthEast United side who are looking to galvanize their arsenal themselves. Also Read- Good outing at AFC Asian Cup can change face of Indian woman football: Manisha NorthEast United are a rung below Odisha in 10th position having nine points from 11 engagements. Meanwhile, Marcellinho is all set to make his NEUFC debut against former club Odisha as the Brazilian forward marks his return to the tournament. With 33 goals and 18 assists in the ISL, Marcellinho brings ample experience and final third ability as NorthEast United hope to turn their season around. Garcia's first job will be to steady the porous defence. Odisha have conceded 24 goals in just 10 games this season. (PTI)

Rohit close to getting match-ready, likely to be available against West Indies

New Delhi, Jan 17 /--/ India's white ball captain Rohit Sharma is recovering well from his left hamstring injury and has a bright chance of making a comeback for the six-match home white-ball series against the West Indies next month. Rohit, who was also the designated Test vice-captain for the tour of South Africa, sustained a left-hamstring strain during a net session just prior to the team's departure for the tour and had to pull out. He was subsequently also forced to skip the ODIs in South Africa, starting this Wednesday, as he couldn't attain full fitness before the selection committee announced the team. "Rohit's rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy is going pretty well. He is expected to be okay for the West Indies series. It's still close to three weeks from now before the first ODI is played in Ahmedabad from February 6," a BCCI source privy to developments told PTI on conditions of anonymity. The series against the West Indies comprises three ODIs and as many T20 Internationals. The one-dayers will be played February 6 to 12, followed by T20Is from February 15 to 20. For Rohit, the hamstring has been a recurrent problem which also forced him to miss the first two Test matches as well as the white-ball leg of the tour of Australia in 2020-21. He did make a comeback for the final two Tests after serving a two-week hard quarantine in Sydney for the last two Test matches. Currently, as per BCCI's policy, each and every player has to mandatorily appear for fitness tests at the NCA before being awarded 'fit to play' certificates. The selection committee is informed about their availability only after this exercise. With Virat Kohli now having relinquished captaincy even from the Test format, there is greater need for Rohit to remain injury-free in the current set-up. It has been an open secret in recent years that apart from being one of the best performers across formats, Rohit has been a few notches above his peers in terms of acceptance of one and all in this team. Having learned the ropes of captaincy handling Mumbai Indians in the IPL, Rohit's man-management is seen closer to MS Dhoni's style. While KL Rahul, because of his age, is being considered a long term all-format leader, something which might also have the backing of head coach Rahul Dravid, what will go in Rohit's favour, despite the fitness and age concern, is his excellent form across formats. "Rohit Sharma should be the bridge before BCCI is confident about the next young India captain that they want the team to lead for at least five years. "This ICC World Test Championship cycle should be about giving it to an experienced hand rather than someone, whose leadership credentials aren't proven enough," a senior BCCI official said. (PTI)



If given an opportunity, it will be an honour to captain India: Jasprit Bumrah New Team Management? 'Change is the only constant'

PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA), JAN 17 /--/ India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Monday said he is not averse to leading the national team if an opportunity comes knocking at his door in the near future. With Virat Kohli's captaincy tenure in all formats coming to an end following his resignation from Test leadership, there are questions about who could be his long-term successor considering that Rohit Sharma will be 35 next year. "If given an opportunity, it will be an honour and I don't see any player (who) would say no and I am no different," Bumrah, who is KL Rahul's deputy for the ODI series against South Africa, replied to a query from PTI in a press conference ahead of the three-match rubber starting Wednesday. "Be it any leadership group, I always look to contribute however I can, to the best of my abilities," he added. Bumrah said taking responsibility and helping teammates comes naturally to him. "I look at this situation in the same manner... taking responsibility and talking to players and helping them out has always been my approach and it will always be my approach going

further keeping any situation in mind." The India pace spearhead believes that there would be no tangible change in his role although he is the vice-captain now. "Having post or not doesn't matter. I always focus on how I can contribute," he said. "For me, the role doesn't change at all. I have to do my job first, isn't it? Trying to contribute as much as I can and then helping KL if he needs any assistance on the field and sharing a bowler's mindset on what kind of fields you can keep that I always look to do," Bumrah said. In fact, he has done all this and more even when he wasn't anointed the vice-captain. "Even when I am not vice-captain, I try to talk to some of the younger guys, have a lot of discussions on what kind of fields that need to be set and the same role I will try to do that again as well. "No specific role or added pressure I am going to take. Yes, helping KL in any way possible and trying to keep a calm head." The Indian team management, following Virat Kohli's complete exit from captaincy roles across formats, bears a new look but Bumrah doesn't see "anything weird" and believes that one needs to respect the new set-up that's in place and start moving ahead. "I can't speak for



everyone but I can say that for me, it doesn't really make much of a difference. I am here to help all in whatever way I can. All the players are responding to the changes that have happened and everybody is respectful and understand how the processes are going." "Change is the only constant and we are happy everybody is contributing and we are getting (acquiring) a lot of knowledge and trying to contribute to that. I don't think anybody is facing a problem or is in a weird

space with the change that is happening," Bumrah spoke for himself. Acceptance is key and that's what Bumrah expects from everyone. "Everybody understands change and have played enough cricket to understand that this is the way the game goes and this is how you move forward. So everyone in the team is quite positive and eager to contribute." There is no fun if there is no responsibility, said Bumrah. "If there is no responsibility or pressure, where is the fun? I look forward to

fulfilling my responsibilities," he said when asked how much he will have to mould himself for the new role. "As a bowler, when I first came into the team, I used to ask a lot of questions and I asked as many questions as possible to the seniors and in this transition phase if anyone asks me questions, the younger lot, I share my experience with them, sometimes, their inputs also help. "If a new guy comes in and gives a fresh perspective, we take that seriously." (PTI)

KL Rahul should be made Test skipper: Sanjay Jagdale

INDORE, JAN 17 /--/ Former BCCI secretary Sanjay Jagdale believes that KL Rahul should be handed over the Indian Test cricket team's captaincy as the 29-year-old batter can provide long-term leadership after Virat Kohli's stunning decision to step down. Kohli on Saturday dropped a bombshell by quitting Test captaincy, a day after India suffered a Test series defeat to a second-string South Africa. The Delhi player signed off as India's most successful captain with 40 wins in 68 Tests after taking over back in 2014 when MS Dhoni stepped down in the middle of the series against Australia. "I feel that the next India Test captain should be the one who can take the responsibility for a longer period of time. So accordingly, I would suggest KL Rahul's name as the next test captain," Jagdale, who was also an office-bearer with Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association



(MPCA), told PTI. The BCCI has not yet announced the next Test captain. Rohit Sharma was named Kohli's deputy before the Test series against South Africa and Rahul took over captaincy duties during the second Test after both Kohli and Rohit suffered injuries. The 71-year-old Indore-based Jagdale feels that Rahul has performed in all the three formats of the game. Jagdale also stressed that the BCCI and the selectors should ensure that the IPL "power centres" do not interfere in policies of Indian cricket. Kohli took India to new heights in his tenure which saw the team become a force to reckon with in all conditions. However, in the past few months, Kohli endured tense relations with the BCCI which removed him as ODI skipper after the star batter decided to leave T20 captaincy. Jagdale, who also played 53 first-class matches, hailed Kohli's contribution. "Nobody can ignore Kohli's contribution in Test cricket," Jagdale, one of the veteran administrators of the game, signed off. (PTI)

U-19 WC: England register 7-wicket win over Bangladesh

BASSETTERRE (ST KITTS AND NEVIS), JAN 17 /--/ Defending champions Bangladesh suffered a seven-wicket loss against England in a lop-sided contest to make a poor start to their campaign at the ICC U-19 World Cup here. Opting to bat, Bangladesh were bundled out for a paltry 97 by England, who then returned to overhaul the target in 25.1 overs. England produced a lethal bowling effort to reduce Bangladesh to 51 for nine in the 25th over at Warner Park in the Group A match. No.11 Ripon Mondol hit 33 not out



in a spirited last-wicket stand of 46 with Naimur Rohman (11) to drag Bangladesh close to the 100-mark. Left-arm pacer Joshua Boyden was the pick of the bowlers for England with figures of four for 16, while right-arm fast bowler Thomas Aspinwall scalped two wickets, giving away 18 runs. Besides, Tom Prest (1/5), Fateh Singh (1/29) and James Sales (1/29) took a wicket each. In reply, England lost opener George Thomas (15) and captain Tom Prest (4) but Jacob Bethell (44) and James Rew (26 not out) put on 65 before the former was run out just shy of the finish line as England cruised to victory. Earlier, Bangladesh's decision to bat first backfired as they lost wickets at regular intervals and slumped to 26 for five by the 14th over. Bangladesh made a slow start to their innings before losing their first

wicket -- Mahfijul Islam -- in the fifth over. Bangladesh's struggle from the onset can be gauged from the fact that only four of their batters managed double digit scores, with last man Mondal top-scoring with a 41-ball unbeaten knock which was studded with five boundaries and one six. Chasing the total, England got off to a slightly nervy start as Bethell survived a run-out scare when SM Meherob could not gather the ball at the stumps with only five on the board. He survived a close lbw appeal off Ashiquur shortly after before opening partner Thomas began to up the ante after a cautious start. But having hit three fours, Thomas perished for 15 when he miscued another attacking shot off Ripon to leave England 20 for one in the ninth over. That breakthrough gave Bangladesh a small glimmer of hope but when the English captain Prest nicked one behind off his counterpart Rakibul for four soon after, the game was very much on. However, Rew joined hands with Bethell and together they batted superbly, counteracting the Bangladesh spin attack to alleviate any potential English nerves. Bethell eventually was run out by Ariful but by then the game was all but over. William Luxton strode out to the crease and promptly hit his first ball down the ground for six before hit the winning runs off the first ball of the 26th over. England thus picked up a comfortable two points to go top of Group A ahead of their match against Canada on Tuesday, while Bangladesh will look to bounce back on Thursday against the same opponents, who lost to the UAE in their opener on Saturday. (PTI)

Brief scores:
Bangladesh: 97 all out in 35.2 overs (Ripon Mondol not out 33; Joshua Boyden 4/16, Thomas Aspinwall 2/18).
England: 98 for 3 in 25.1 overs (Jacob Bethell 44; Rakibul Hasan 1/13).

Osaka, Nadal advance in Australia after Djokovic flies home

MELBOURNE, JAN 17 /--/ The first test of Naomi Osaka's new approach to tennis might have been when she completely whiffed an overhead to give her opponent a break point on Day 1 of the no-Novak-Djokovic Australian Open. Osaka didn't chuck her racket. She didn't roll her eyes. She smiled. There are situations where I previously would get upset. But at this point in my life, like, I'm here because I want to be here and because I find that it's fun for me, Osaka said. Might as well enjoy it while I still can. In Osaka's mind, the drama involving nine-time champion Djokovic's deportation on the eve of the Australian Open was something for the players in the men's draw to worry about. Her title defense began smoothly enough: She won the first five games on the way to a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Camila Osorio on the main court. With so much attention on the 11-day saga of Djokovic's attempt to participate in the year's first Grand Slam tournament, and bid for a fourth consecutive title at Melbourne Park, the returns of Osaka and Rafael Nadal have been overshadowed. Osaka wasn't bothered by that. Nadal didn't seem to be

put off by it, either, renewing his bid for a record 21st Grand Slam singles title with a 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 win over Marcos Giron. Growing up, I've looked up to him, said Giron, a 28-year-old from the U.S. He's one of the absolute legends of the game. Nadal is tied with Djokovic and Roger Federer with 20 major singles titles each, the most in the history of men's tennis. With Djokovic unable to defend his crown in Melbourne because he didn't meet Australia's strict COVID-19 vaccination criteria, the door is slightly more ajar to Nadal. Osaka's main concern, meanwhile, is winning a fifth major title, and her third at the Australian Open. To be completely honest, it didn't really affect me, Osaka said about what went on with Djokovic. My goal, like even before this whole situation, is to just focus on myself more, what I need to do to become better. Me, I'm a tennis player. I'll focus on my matches. You as, I guess, an audience, focus on whatever is in the news, no? A potential fourth-round meeting with top-ranked Ash Barty could be waiting. Barty, aiming to be the first Australian woman to win the title here since 1978,

started with a 6-0, 6-1 win over Lesia Tsurenko. After winning here last year, capturing her second Australian Open title in three years, Osaka pulled out of the 2021 French Open before the second round, then sat out Wimbledon. She played at the Tokyo Olympics, where she lit the cauldron, but ended her 2021 season early after a third-round loss and a tearful news conference at the U.S. Open. Two of her goals for 2022, she said last week, were to stay completely composed on the court and off, and to enjoy the game. And, yes, finally, the focus was on tennis in Australia. And it got started in a big way, with a combined 64 matches scheduled on Day 1 in the men's and women's singles. French Open champion Barbora Krejickova, fifth-seeded Maria Sakkari, No. 15 Elina Svitolina and two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka all advanced. Two young U.S. contenders went out in the first round, with 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin losing 7-6 (2), 7-5 to fellow American Madison Keys and No. 18 Coco Gauff saving five match points before losing 6-4, 6-2 to Wang Qiang.

